Vowel lengthening in the Indonesian particle "oh" (/o/)
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Although studies in pragmatic particles have accepted the notion that some particles are cross-culturally comparable (for example in Östman, 2006; Wouk, 1999; Sari, 2008), such a notion is bound to be contested until a thorough phonological investigation on a specific particle offers new understanding about a particle. This paper presents a phonological analysis of the interjection-functioning particle "oh" /o/ in Indonesian, using naturally-occurring conversational data containing the prevalence of vowel lengthening characteristics in the particle that point toward some interpretations relevant to the speaker's common ground and knowledge. New data consisting of just over 14,000 words of spoken Indonesian corpora based on consultation sessions between faculty members and students in two universities in Jakarta recorded in 2009 were analyzed. Using Schiffrin's participation framework (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 274), Fraser's concept of speaker attitude of solidarity (Fraser, 1990, p. 392), Jucker and Smith's situational common ground (Jucker & Smith, 1998, p. 194), and Brazil's key in intonation (Brazil, 1997, p. 40), I focused on providing new insights of the particle.

Based on the data, vowel lengthening of the particle /o/ consists of two intonational types (shorter and longer) and sustains the continuity of a conversation and the speaker-interlocutor relationship throughout an utterance. Functionally, the particle is used as particle of affirmation close to English 'I see' or 'I get it', with some additional meaning in the longer lengthening of the vowel, such as 'I did not know that'. The speaker then does not overtly state 'yes. I agree with you' or 'I heard what you said'. Rather, the affirmation comes in form of a lengthened intonation contour of the vowel that informs the interlocutor of such an opinion. Interestingly, the linguistic practice is related to colloquial Indonesian stressing less on word articulateness, more on common ground, and toward the cultural assumptions that Indonesian speakers commonly avoid overt expressions that would reveal self-lack of knowledge, at least in the initial response. The following sample explains the shorter lengthening (1) and longer lengthening (2) the particle "o":

(1) The shorter lengthening of the vowel /o/ signifies interjectory functions, such as 'okay', or 'I get it', or 'I see', mostly in low-key. For example, after hearing the adviser's statement about a possibility that the student may find a discussion topic unfavorable, the student responded by using the particle with a shorter vowel lengthening.

1	L	atau mungkin dia subjeknya apa nanti kamu rasa itu kurang tepat.
		or maybe it becomes a subject then you feel it not right
2	S	//oo//

S' response shows that she saw that such an issue may arise and that she understood that it might create a problem as L pointed out. A low-key /o/ provides the particle with the emphasis of expression.

(2) The longer lengthening of the vowel /o-o/ suggests an elaborate pragmatic function of 'I see. I did not know that', commonly found in mid-key. To illustrate, when asking the student doing a project on isolated seed planting about taking out the samples out of the isolation area, the adviser reacted on the student's hesitation to proceed for fear of causing the new plants to wilt.

3	G	Kalo dikeluarin itu mendingan. Cuma kalo dikeluarin takutnya...
		If taken out it is better. However, if taken out I am afraid …
4	L	//oooo—//

The conversational segment indicates that L's lengthening the vowel contributes to her way to show that she understood G's hesitation and that she did not know about the fear being the drive of the G's hesitation. A mid-key /o-o/ serves this interactional function.

Other findings include the phonological characteristics where most occurrences of /o/ were not clearly pronounced with glottal stop [ʔ], but more uninterrupted as in /o-o/. Word-ending glottal fricative in Indonesian is usually well-pronounced, e.g., *bawah*, *rumah*, *roboh*, *jatuh*, etc. Such a case, however, is different from pragmatic particles that are commonly monosyllabic words. It becomes evident that typographical categorization of the particles suggesting their consecutive pronunciation can no longer be maintained, for example, *wah* /wa/, *loh* /lo/ or /lho/, *sih* /si/, *tah* /ta/, *mah* /ma/, *nah* /na/, and finally *oh* /o/ or /o-o/.

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